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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 NDJAMENA 000016

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SUBJECT: CHAD ELECTION PROCESS GAINING MOMENTUM: COMPLETE
2010-11 ELECTION TIMETABLE ADOPTED JANUARY 6

REF: A. NDJAMENA 004

[1](#)B. 09 NDJAMENA 586

SUMMARY
AND COMMENT

[1](#)1. (SBU) Chad's national election process has gained significant momentum since President Deby's December 5 convocation of political party leaders to unite them around the common goal of credible legislative and municipal elections in 2010. Chad's international partners including the U.S. have formed a working group to coordinate assistance to the electoral process, advising UNDP experts on a draft electoral timetable for polling as called for in the August 13, 2007 Accord. On December 28, Deby met with key institutional actors -- the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI), the Steering Committee for achievement of August 13 Accords (Comite de suivi), and international democratic partners to prevail on them to work toward the common goal of elections this year and next. Chad's electoral calendar, adopted January 6 by the CENI, sets November 28, 2010 as the date for legislative elections; December 12, 2010 as the date for Chad's first-ever municipal elections; and April 23, 2011 as the date for presidential elections. The next two essential steps -- setting up a Permanent Electoral Board and carrying out an electoral census to establish voter rolls -- will take place in January 2010, and March to May, 2010, respectively.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Although this ambitious electoral process could eventually fall behind schedule, it provides a template for potential success, and will give the international working group the ability to foresee potential problems in advance and to deploy its advice, encouragement and assistance appropriately and effectively, especially at predictable sticking points. President Deby's two interventions and the coordinated, targeted support of the international community have been key to momentum in a process that had been lagging following the establishment of the CENI in July. END SUMMARY AND COMMENT.

INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE KEY

¶3. (SBU) International advice and involvement have been key to resolving some long-standing debates within the Chadian body politic that had earlier blocked agreement on whether to hold elections, and later to set a date for them. An ad hoc ambassadorial-level working group of democratic nations and entities -- comprised of representatives from UNDP, EU, AU, OIF, France, Germany, and Switzerland, as well as the U.S. -- has been meeting bi-weekly since November to ensure good international cooperation and cohesion with respect to Chad's electoral preparations. The group met December 24 with visiting UNDP experts to work out a detailed timeline for upcoming votes. In addition to laying out notional dates for legislative, municipal and presidential contests, the group specified a timeframe for announcement and certification of electoral results and outlined changes that would likely be necessary to Chadian law in order for elections to take place on schedule. The group recommended that the number of polling stations currently called for -- some 17,000 -- be reduced, and that an upper limit on the number of National Assembly deputies be set at 180.

¶4. (SBU) The ad hoc working group also agreed provisionally, pending final approval in New York and Brussels, that UNDP would serve as overall coordinator of international assistance to the Chadian electoral process, with UNDP experts taking the lead on help with the electoral census, and that the EU would be deputy international coordinator, taking the lead on advice-giving to the CENI. Other members of the ad hoc working group have agreed to coordinate their support to the electoral process, both

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advice-giving and financial.

MOMENTUM BUILDING

¶5. (SBU) UNDP presented the international community's timeline, proposals and recommendations to President Deby on December 28, in the company of reps of the CENI and Comite se suivi. Deby stressed his commitment to elections in 2010 and ¶2011. He said that Chad was capable of staging democratic processes and that it wanted international electoral assistance. He specified that per the August 2007 Accord on rapprochement between governing and opposition parties, the Comite de suivi (on which the international community has observer seats) should assist the CENI in electoral preparations. (In November, Deby revitalized the Electoral Reform Committee by naming the dynamic new Chairman of his Popular Movement for Solidarity party, former Prime Minister Nagoum Yamassoum, as head of the MPS delegation on the body.)

¶6. (SBU) UNDP's timeline was given to the CENI on January 5, and that body adopted it unanimously one day later. In a press conference on January 6, CENI head Ngarmadjal Gami laid out the dates for 2010 and 2011 elections and dates during which the electoral census would be conducted. He conceded that the CENI had made a slow start in the months following its establishment in July 2009, but he promised a considerably accelerated pace with respect to legislative reforms necessary to keep the electoral timetable on track, and also with respect to technical preparations such as districting. Gami noted that the CENI would work closely with the Chadian media to see that information on electoral processes and voter entitlements was disseminated widely in advance of the various contests.

USG ASSISTANCE
TO CHAD ELECTIONS

17. (SBU) A USAID team of democracy and conflict experts visited Chad December 5-18, consulted extensively in N'Djamena and elsewhere, and arrived at a plan to spend USD five million for elections and election-related conflict mitigation activities. This plan reflected Post's priorities and was welcomed by the GOC and by international partners to whom it was briefed, including our colleagues on the international working group, MINURCAT, etc. (NOTE: In 2009, USG contributed 1.3 million USD to a national demographic census, a prerequisite for the subsequent election process.)

COMMENT

18. (SBU) Although this ambitious electoral process could eventually fall behind schedule, it provides a template for success, and will give the international working group the ability to foresee potential problems in advance and to deploy its advice, encouragement and assistance appropriately and effectively, especially at predictable sticking points. President Deby's two interventions and the coordinated, targeted support of the international community have been key to momentum in a process that had been lagging following the establishment of the CENI in July.

19. (U) Minimize considered.
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